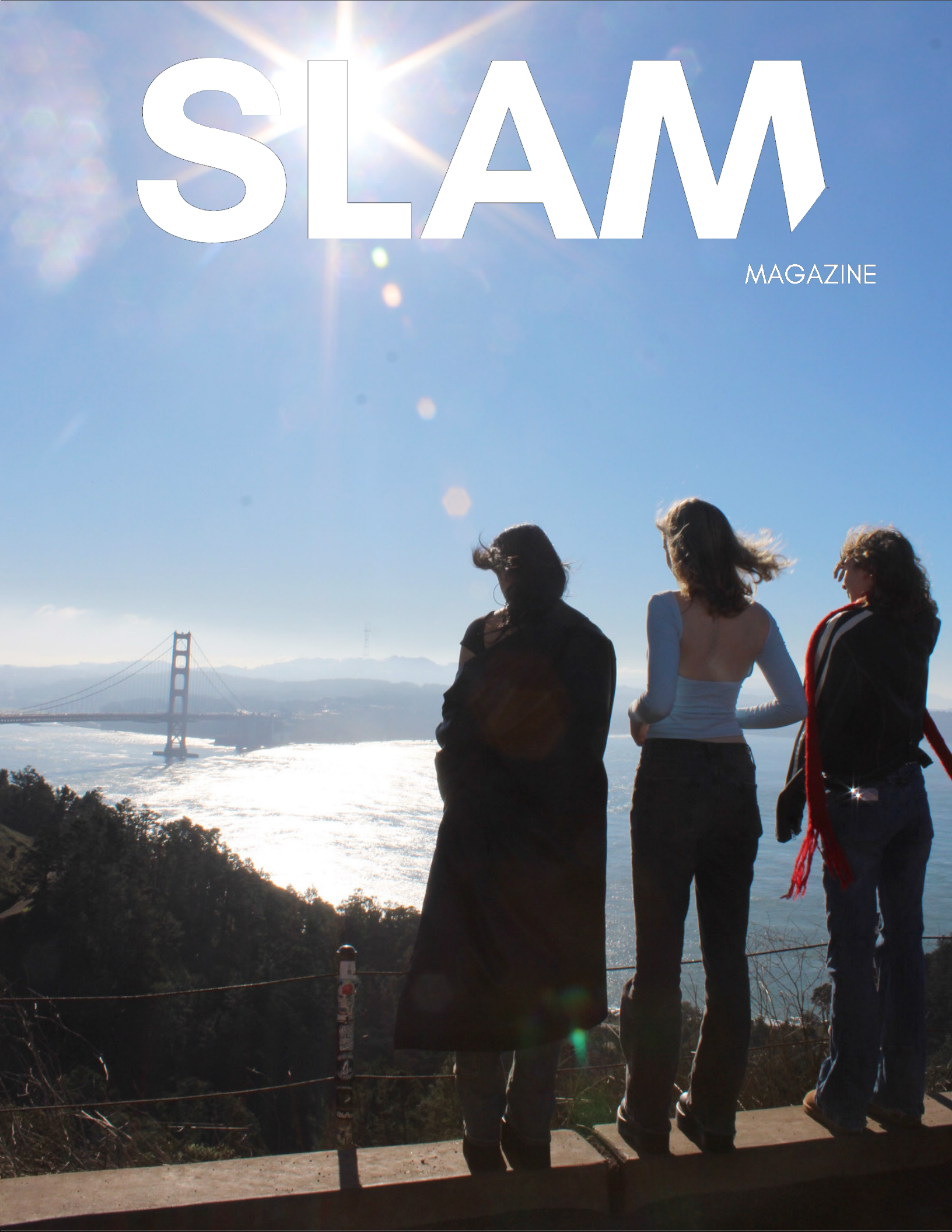
SLAM

MAGAZINE



our m

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SLAM Magazine is committed to illuminating the complexity and intersections of social issues today through writing critically and analytically and making provocative art.

Design by: Annie Marcelino

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order #007

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12 GOING ON 21

Article by: Kavya Wazhi | Design by: Dhrithi Vishwa and Cari Chen

In Steven Spielberg's Poltergeist, television is a powerful symbolic gateway to a supernatural world. Within the intimacy of a household, the television emerges as an intruder, taking our grasp of reality hostage. The parent's failure to fulfill adult responsibilities jeopardizes their children's innocence. This film's narrative presents an interesting view of the power of outside influences on youth without strong parental guidance.

The fast-evolving technological landscape of the 21st century has grown to fit this supernatural depiction, specifically in the development of teenagers. The adaptation of media and film has revolutionized how teenagers navigate from adolescence to adulthood. These external pressures have accelerated the pace of maturing and led to the extinction of the teen demographic.

The 2000s bright-lit neon studio sets of Nickelodeon and Disney Channel productions appealed to the teen demographic. Family-friendly programs kept sexual content to a minimum and presented in consideration to a youth audience. The pressure to showcase age-appropriate content can be identified in childish elements of humor, censored relationships, and conservative fashion.

Young television viewers are often influenced by their favorite characters whom they look up to as role models. Consider the non-coincidental similarities between Disney sitcom stars Hannah Montana and Rocky Blue and their middle school admirers. Fans tend to emulate characters through fashion, with the rise of jeggings, layered tops, and brands such as Justice and Gap during the 2000s. The parallels between film and reality become more difficult to distinguish as teenagers adapt to fit on-screen depictions of their demography.

A couple of decades later, the trend is the same, but screens now radiate dark blues and purples that starkly contrast the vivid colors of past television. The taboo of sexual relations has released its grip on society and paved the way for more raunchy film depictions. The CW and HBO are popular television networks contributing to the decline in teen-appropriate selections. Hour-long episodes of Riverdale and Euphoria highlight a broad range of adult topics, from serial killers to drug use, that tend not to portray realistic teenage life.

Kat from Euphoria shows character development that aligns with many teens navigating their adolescence, likely influenced by her on-screen depiction. She is originally presented as a socially awkward, insecure character. She challenges this image through sexual exploration. She uses fashion in the style of corsets, tight skirts, and fishnet stockings to gain self-confidence, essentially associating the sexualization of oneself with attacking the patriarchy. However, the film quickly reframes this feminist perspective by capturing the vulnerability of teenagers on online platforms.

Additionally, casting choices of late 20s and early 30s actors to portray teenagers unhealthily idealizes maturity, making teens insecure about their developing appearance. It pressures teens to appear as adults by using make-up products to accentuate their features because they believe that is how they should look, even if it is far from the truth. This ultimately feeds into insecurities and worsens the journey of self-identity that teens struggle to face even away from all the outside influences.

The teens of the 2000s were slowly introduced to the age of technology, first with flip phones, then BlackBerries, and eventually the yearly model release of an iPhone. But for the new generation of teens, this adjustment is lacking. The transition to the digital age is rushed. Children are not educated on their digital footprint, identity theft, or online strangers when given their first phones. Adulthood is developed online, where teens are unaware of the dangers they interact with constantly.

The internet can represent freedom to many teens to express themselves and their creativity. However, it has also made teens' self-esteem dependent on the amount of likes and comments on their posts. Social media has planted a desire to feel empowered, attractive, and wanted. This desire feeds into the intense comparison and pressure online teens feel to meet unrealistic ideals. Posting bikini pictures and thirst traps is now an embodiment of female empowerment when, in reality, it encourages the destructive sexualization of young girls.

However, the sexualization of young girls is not a new concept. Traditional school dress codes enforce double standards by specifically regulating girls' clothing to limit distractions of knees and shoulders, indirectly promoting the objectification of female bodies and an inappropriate perspective on minors. Societal beauty standards set uncanny values on youthfulness with increasing popularity in artificial youth preservation, such as Botox injections. People are afraid to grow old, as it is associated with ugliness.

The internet is a perfect setting for people to continue oversexualizing young girls. Teens are forced into an environment where they have an audience watching them navigate their sexual development. Screenshots and saved images stored as prehistoric fossils capture every awkward phase of a teenager's life. Without teenagers being taught technological literacy, we cannot expect them to understand the precautions to take on social media.

This responsibility lies in the hands of adults. Teenagers turn to other adult figures when parental guidance is absent. Teens who use social media to interact with influencers tag them with role model labels and get caught in a loop of comparison and idealization. With trends changing daily, peer pressure has expanded to a new level. And the trend of an influencer lifestyle doesn't seem to be slowing down.

The Kardashians are the ultimate example of a teenage girl's future dream. For example, the increase in BBL procedures, even significant in middle-class populations, indicates the Kardashians' influence over beauty standards. Even though teenagers may not have the ability to get breast implants or nose jobs, their ability to be influenced can be seen on another level with full-beat makeup, acrylic nails, tube tops, and tight dresses. Teens are almost not allowed to live how they want but are forced to live up to their peers.

Our moms may argue they were once teenage girls, but much has changed. The small bubble of our community can no longer keep us safe and protected from the outside world. Earlier than ever, we are exposed to good and bad influences that blur together in the technological landscape. Being a teenage girl is not a universal experience, especially in an era that hides authenticity in the search for empathy.

In the words of Cecilia Lisbon's failed suicide note, "'Obviously, Doctor, you've never been a thirteen-year-old girl.'"
- Jeffrey Eugenides, The Virgin Suicides

Photos by: Whitney Ross and William Anderson

UNDERVALUED BAY AREA

There is a common misconception that there are not many things to do in the Bay Area. However, there are so many hidden spots located all around the Bay ranging from quick eats to less known picturesque locations. The Bay is a connection of many cities and towns that incorporate so many different cultures from all around the world. There are endless options yet to discover!

Article by: Cosette Upender
Design by: Maya Yoder & Sofi Goldwater
Photos by: Sofi Goldwater

GRAFFITI

Between the crossover of Steve
Creek trail and Hwy 85, you c
go through the fence and wa
down steps to find a graffiti t
spray painted by locals.

Through Campbell park, turn left at the walking trail, and underneath you'll find a beautiful lake, a great place to hang out with friends! The rock path down is easily climbable and it's a fun spot to visit on sunny days.

SWEET SHOP

AKE

The Sweet Shop is a fun hidden candy story located in Los Altos. Candies range from a large variety of gummies to delicious frozen yogurt!

HILLS

Communications Hill in San Jose offers a 252-step staircase with a stunning view over the city. It's open to the public, but be respectful of residents. It's a great place to get some exercise!

If you are looking for a tasty snack, stop by Cafe 86! Cafe 86 aims to incorporate Filipino recipes with an emphasis on Ube. The classic halo halo is to die for at this spot!

CAFE

TO DIE
By Luisa Haller

Why do we die?
Is it so the chance of change will never fly by?
Or is it so we can see who succeeded in life and gets to fly high?
Is it so we learn to say good-bye?
Let me clarify.
Is it the battle cry that no one wants to speak?
Does it have to leak our mouths, for us to learn how to succeed?
Is that the thought of a freak?
Or is it mother nature's job to us that we are not weak?
Is that why we die?

THE BUBBLE OF GR

BAY A

Nestled on the edge of the Pacific Coast, enclosed by chaotic, bustling cities filled with heads glued to laptops and phones, lies the Bay Area. Reflecting off the shimmering waters of the Bay, skyscrapers brush the clouds as the sun sets for the day. Encircling around the Bay Area, a clear shield stretches from Marin to Santa Clara County. Although this shield is invisible and may seem like it is not present to the citizens living within the bubble, this division is unquestionably there. Sitting in this little bubble is perfection, or what looking through the thin, milky shield may be perceived as perfection. However, "perfect societies" always have cracks that, when left untreated, can grow from just small roots into big trees.

Looking at the Bay Area from an outside perspective, it may be hard to find flaws. The Bay Area's mix of diversity weaves its way into innovations, dreams, and opportunities. No city in the Bay Area is the same as they each tell their own unique story. The Bay Area has many positive attributes, such as access to new and advanced technology due to Silicon Valley's location in the Bay Area. Silicon Valley significantly impacts the Bay Area's culture and tech world. Just as Silicon Valley influences the world with its profound technology and engineering insights, it also affects how the Bay Area views the technological world. In the Bay Area, STEAM-based opportunities are more accessible and easy to find both in educational curriculums as well as the occupational landscape. Innovations are always seen and tested in the Bay Area's communities. For instance, a Tesla may be a car seen occasionally in states around the United States; however, in the Bay Area, they are a dime a dozen. Lined up in every parking lot, rows and rows of Teslas line up in public charging stations. This may seem normal to a Bay Area citizen, but in reality, this type of technology is not so commonly seen around the world. This jaded perception prevents many people in the Bay Area from understanding what the real world is like.

ROWING UP IN THE AREA

This jaded perception prevents many people in the Bay Area from understanding what the real world is like.

Another positive aspect of the Bay Area is the inclusivity and high diversity. Throughout the Bay Area, many cultures and ethnicities are represented, given the number of immigrants and minorities residing in this area. Appreciation of these cultures is what makes the Bay Area so special. Simply going out to eat or grabbing a drink introduces a variety of options. Maybe you are in the mood for a savory Indian Masala Dosa, or perhaps you would like a classic Filipino dessert, Halo Halo. The possibilities are endless! In the Bay Area, there is a significant Asian influence from many different Asian countries worldwide, bringing new perspectives to this area. Strong Latino cultural representation is also very prevalent in the Bay Area. There are innumerable activities and events that incorporate cultures from across the world.

With this cultural diversity comes vast and different perspectives, which helps the Bay Area to develop a progressive mindset. Since we are given many opportunities to learn about new and different cultures and varying world perspectives in the Bay Area, we are able to learn and think with an open mind. This progressive mindset helps the Bay Area create an inclusive environment that is open to all cultures and new ways of thinking. Although the Bay has a handful of good qualities, the negative aspects ingrained into society are highly prevalent and cause unfortunate divides.

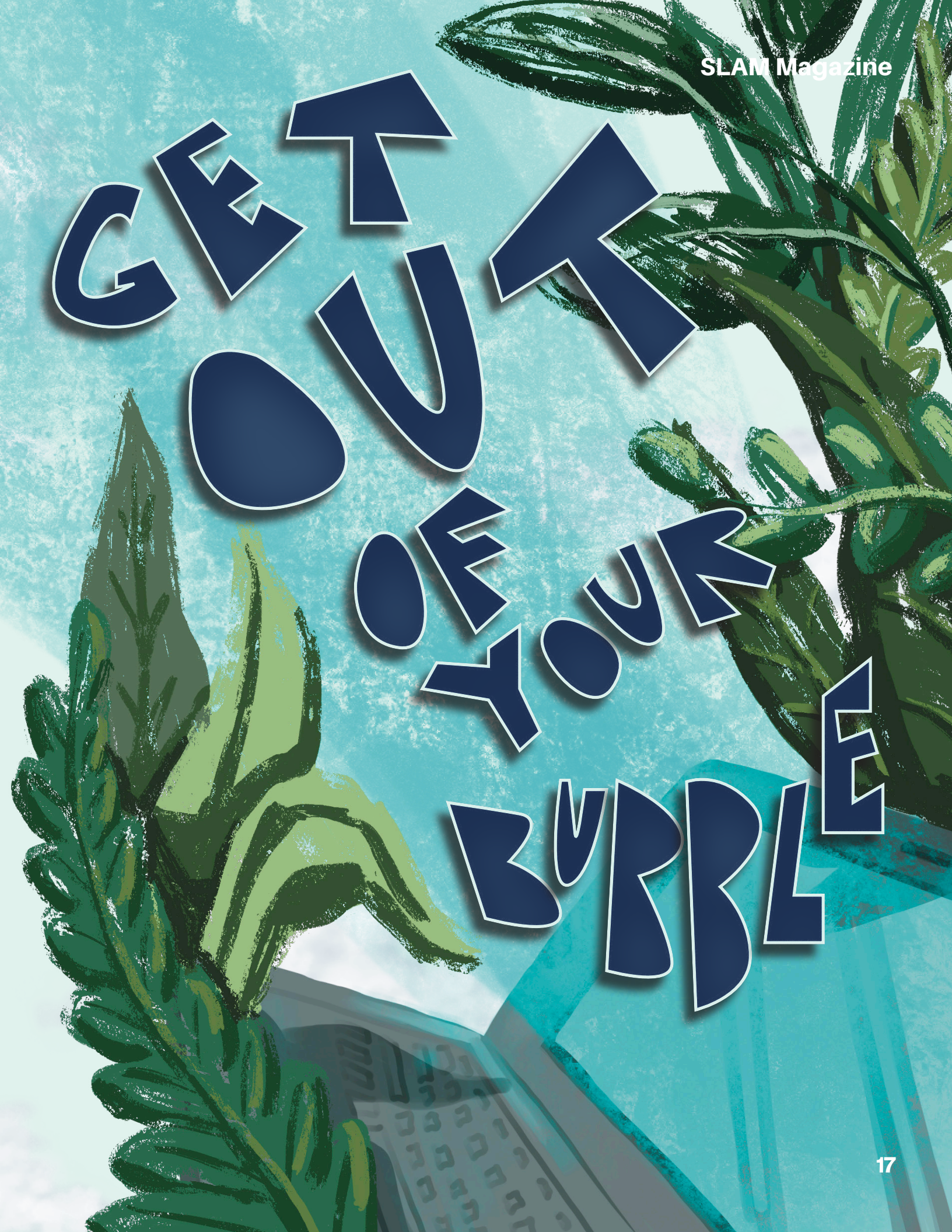
The Bay Area is home to many passionate advocates for social and political issues. However, this can place the Bay Area into a separate bubble where particular views are more prevalent, and others are criticized and may be less widely embraced. Unfortunately, an overarching attitude that is detrimental and almost exclusive in the Bay Area is ingrained into our

society. Due to the Bay Area's constant exposure to diversity, a liberal mentality, and a nonconformist viewpoint, an elitist viewpoint has emerged. Consequently, the Bay Area may look down on the rest of the states and judge them based on their lack of exposure to these opportunities. For example, in the Bay Area, it is not uncommon for many to master the skill of using chopsticks even though their ethnicity may not use chopsticks. Due to the ample Asian influence in our area, this skill is more commonly demonstrated. However, what often comes as a surprise to many in the Bay is that this is not a typical "norm" in other states in the U.S. Those in the Bay may look down upon others in other areas who have not mastered this skill instead of looking at why most non-Bay Area people would not feel the need to learn this skill.

This divide is unfortunately evident as the differences between many groups in the Bay Area are examined. One significant cause for this divide is the expense of living in the Bay Area. Housing, income inequalities, and lack of educational and job market opportunities all add to this divide. In the Bay, many different people are represented in every city and town, all coming from different socioeconomic classes. However, a classist viewpoint does form where those in lower socioeconomic groups are considered to be less than. Due to the tech industry dominating the workforce, those who fall into the lower socioeconomic class struggle to keep up with the high wages allotted to tech workers. The high cost of living makes it challenging for lower-income individuals to afford homes afforded by high-paid tech workers.

Although the Bay Area is home to an abundance of culture, inclusivity, and unique experiences, the negative aspects ingrained into our society must be addressed. We are fortunate enough to live in such a high opportunity environment, but we must also understand the factors that make our society inconsistent for all members. There is much intersectionality within our community, as well as many differences. These differences make our society so unique and should be celebrated. All together, we work as a community to build the Bay Area to what it is now, so we must work together to alleviate inequalities and support every member of our community.

Article by: Cosette Upender
Design by: Annie Marcelino and Tyler Spratt


GET
OUT
OF
YOUR
BUBBLE

MEDIA REVIEW

WHAT WERE YOUR 5-STAR READS OF 2023?

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN WAS MY 5-STAR BOOK OF 2023. I REALLY LOVE THE LORD OF THE RINGS, AND THIS IS MY FAVORITE ONE. I LIKE HOW THE PARTY IS ALL TOGETHER IN THE FIRST BOOK. LAST NIGHT AT THE TELEGRAPH CLUB BY MALINDA LO IS ANOTHER 5-STAR BOOK FOR ME. I LOVED THE CHARACTERS, AND IT WAS INTERESTING TO READ ABOUT THE DRAG SCENE DURING THE RED SCARE." -SOFA VINCENT, 12

"DOWN THE DRAIN BY JULIA FOX. IT IS ONE OF THE BETTER, MORE ENTERTAINING CELEBRITY BOOKS OF 2023. WRITTEN 100% BY HER, AND HER LORE IS CRAZY." -WILLIAM ANDERSON, 12

"SUPERMAN: DAWNBREAKER BY MATT DE LA PEÑA. IT WAS A FUN AND ACTION-PACKED STORY THAT PUT AN INTERESTING TWIST ON THE SUPERMAN STORY." -RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"THE HUNGER GAMES SERIES BY SUZANNE COLLINS BECAUSE IT IS ENTERTAINING TO REREAD TRUE CLASSICS. IT IS THE SAME WITH THE PERCY JACKSON SERIES BY RICK RIORDAN, WHICH I READ TO PREGAME THE TV SERIES." -AIZLYN POLIKA-ENGLE, 12

"THE SUN AND THE STAR BY MARK OSHIRO AND RICK RIORDAN" - LUCIE RAYNAUD, 12

WHAT BOOKS ARE ON YOUR 2024 READING LIST?

"THIS REBEL HEART BY KATHERINE LOCKE AND WHEN WE WERE SISTERS BY FATIMAH ASGHAR." -SOFA VINCENT, 12

"SIX OF CROWS BY LEIGH BARDUGO AND WHAT IF IT'S US BY BECKY ALBERTALLI AND ADAM SILVERA." -LUCIE RAYNAUD, 12

"DEAD MAN'S FOLLY BY AGATHA CRISTIE AND IN SEARCH OF SCHRODINGER'S CAT BY JOHN GRIBBIN." -RONAN HEATLEY, 12

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ? HOW WOULD YOU RATE IT FROM 1-5?

"MAYBE MORE THROWBACK SERIES LIKE DIVERGENT BY VERONICA ROTH AND HARRY POTTER BY J.K. ROWLING." -AIZLYN POLIKA-ENGLE, 12

"HUNGER GAMES: THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES BY SUZANNE COLLINS. IT WAS GREAT, 4.5 STARS." -AIZLYN POLIKA-ENGLE, 12

"SHOOTER BY JACK COUGHLIN. I'D RATE IT 2.5 OR 3 STARS." -RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"DOWN THE DRAIN BY JULIA FOX AND 5 STARS." -WILLIAM ANDERSON, 12

"THE LAST BOOK I READ WAS THE HOBBIT BY J.R.R TOLKIEN. I WOULD GIVE IT 4.5 STARS." -SOFA VINCENT, 12

Design by Kai Zhou and Maya

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE GENRE AND WHY?

"I ENJOY FICTION BOOKS, MAINLY ACTION FICTION BECAUSE THEY HAVE INTENSE AND IMAGINATIVE STORIES."
-RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"BIOGRAPHY. I THINK WE CAN LEARN THE MOST THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES AND PERSPECTIVES."
-WILLIAM ANDERSON, 12

WHY DO YOU THINK FINISHING BOOKS IS A GROWING CHALLENGE FOR TEENAGERS?

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH READING SLUMPS?

"I REREAD MY FAVORITE SERIES."
-SOFA VINCENT, 12

"I THINK SINCE WE HAVE SO MUCH TO DO, WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO COMMIT TO READING A BOOK." -LUCIE RAYNAUD, 12

"I TEND TO READ THE MOST WHEN I PUT MY PHONE OR LAPTOP OUT OF REACH OR GET INTO A READING ROUTINE."
-RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"DISTRACTIONS, LACK OF INTEREST, SHORTENED ATTENTION SPAN."
-WILLIAM ANDERSON, 12

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON ASSIGNED READING?

"I DON'T MIND ASSIGNED READING BECAUSE I USUALLY END UP ENJOYING THE BOOK."
-SOFA VINCENT, 12

"HATE IT. I DON'T LIKE BEING FORCED TO READ BORING STUFF."
-AIZLYN POLIKA-ENGLE, 12

"IT HAS TRANSFORMED MY EXPERIENCE POSITIVELY. IT IS EASIER TO KEEP MY ATTENTION AND FIND ANSWERS FASTER."
-AIZLYN POLIKA-ENGLE, 12

HOW DO YOU THINK REPLACING PHYSICAL BOOKS WITH DIGITAL COPIES (EBOOKS, AUDIOBOOKS, ETC.) HAS TRANSFORMED OUR READING EXPERIENCE?

HOW DO YOU THINK BOOKS ARE LIKE A MIRROR TO OUR SOCIETY? WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE?

"ALTHOUGH DIGITAL BOOKS ARE MUCH MORE CONVENIENT, I THINK THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SITTING DOWN, TAKING TIME AWAY FROM SCREENS, AND READING A PHYSICAL COPY IS VERY RELAXING AND SOMEWHAT MEDITATIVE."
-RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"A LOT OF BOOKS TAKE CERTAIN PIECES OF OUR WORLD AND SLIGHTLY ALTER IT TO MAKE IT WORSE. FOR EXAMPLE, PARABLE OF THE SOWER BY OCTAVIA E. BUTLER (WHICH WAS A TERRIBLE BOOK) LOOKED AT THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDUSTRY-RUN TOWNS."
-LUCIE RAYNAUD, 12

HOW HAS A BOOK CHANGED OR CHALLENGED YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

"BOOKS STYLES AND GENRES CHANGE AND OFTEN REFLECT THE VIEWS AND VALUES OF MODERN SOCIETY."
-RONAN HEATLEY, 12

"BOOKS CAN MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT SCENARIOS YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN THROUGH. A LOT OF THE TIME, THEY PROVIDE COMMENTARY ON WHAT THE WORLD COULD BE, SO IT CHANGES MY PERSPECTIVE OF HOW I MIGHT ACT IN A CERTAIN SITUATION."
-LUCIE RAYNAUD, 12

the pi

Article by: Jasmine Burgess

Pink. It's a girl's color. Girls should wear pink, and boys should wear blue. If you do anything different, you're "rebelling." It's these types of societal expectations that have women feeling as though they should be purchasing items marketed for women, the pink-colored items, despite those items being the more expensive option. The industry has taken advantage of the pressure women feel to comply with society's expectations of them, to make more money, and they do this through the "Pink Tax."

The pink tax, yet often unheard of, refers to the raised prices of products for women. Products such as razors and shaving foams, deodorants, and clothing, all fall victim to this trend, despite those products serving the same purpose, and sometimes even falling short in performance compared to products catered more towards men. This system reinforces a world where women are faced with challenges unheard of from the male point of view, forcing women to spend more money on necessities that men do not pay as much for, simply because those products are for women.

A study done by the New York Times found that on average, women's products are a staggering 13% more expensive than male products, even going as far as labeling menstrual products as luxury items due to such high costs. On average, one in four women cannot afford menstrual products, an obvious necessity for all women alike. Action has been taken on this particular section of this issue as California State Law now requires free menstrual products to be provided in school bathrooms starting from the sixth grade up to state universities. Despite this being a significant step, it does not account for the origin of the issue, that is, the products being too expensive in the first place. Students have access, but students do not make up the entire female population, so the issue must be targeted in a way that attacks their status as a luxury item.

The pink tax spreads even as far as hair services, the average woman's haircut costs 93 dollars in California, a high contrast to the male price of 40 dollars in California. Gendering the price of haircuts may seem rational due to the difference in the two services, women's hair generally being longer and men's often being shorter, yet this does not account for everyone. There are plenty of men with long hair, and women with short hair, the obvious answer would be charging

nk tax

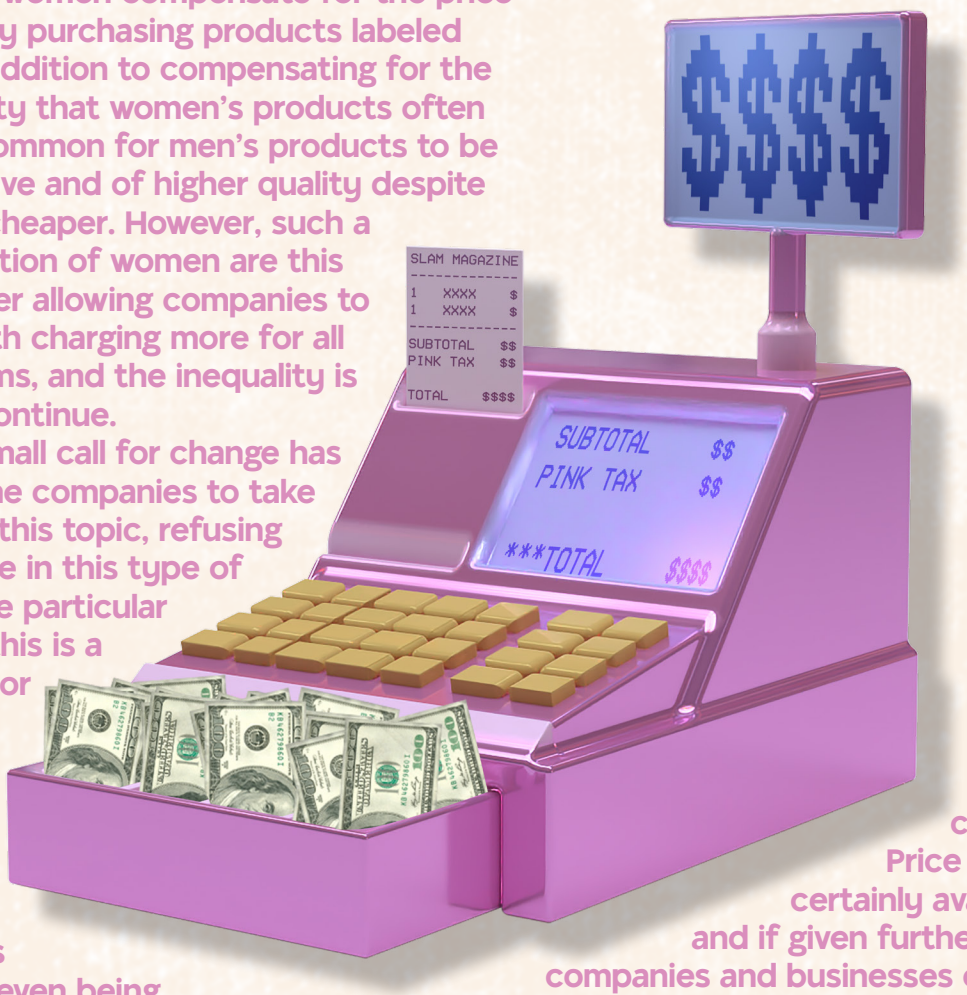
s | Design by: Dhrithi Vishwa

for the type of service, rather than the gender of the customer.

Some women compensate for the price difference by purchasing products labeled for men, in addition to compensating for the lack of quality that women's products often serve. It is common for men's products to be more effective and of higher quality despite their being cheaper. However, such a small proportion of women are this aware, further allowing companies to get away with charging more for all of these items, and the inequality is allowed to continue.

The small call for change has inspired some companies to take a stance on this topic, refusing to participate in this type of taxation. One particular example of this is a women's razor subscription service called "Billie", charging half of what other brands charge, and even being more inexpensive than some men's shaving brands. However, companies such as these are so rare that few women can provide their support, in addition to the initial lack of awareness on the subject.

Differences in prices between men and women stretch beyond the pink tax, even health insurance was generally more expensive for women until The Affordable Care Act banned gendered prices. Health insurance companies would claim that possible pregnancies had to be considered in their quoted prices, something that obviously would not be shared with their male counterparts. The ban on this type of price discrimination shows the progress that can be made when attention is brought to the subject, attention that should also be turned towards the pink tax's effect on women's everyday lives, and attention that can establish equal prices in all categories.



In a perfect world, no gender would bear any type of discrimination, but in our far-from-perfect world, we should at least be making an effort to eliminate the discrimination that is within our control. Gendered Price Discrimination is certainly available for change, and if given further attention, more companies and businesses could change their policies and reject participation in the pink tax. The push for change in this type of discrimination can help us as a society move towards that perfect world just a little bit more. We would move towards a world that wouldn't see boys as blue and girls as pink, a world that does not expect women to pay to be women.

TRENDS COMING TO LIGHT

Written By: Juliette Bru
Designed By: Juno Winegar and Annie Marcelino

The 90s and early 2000s trends and fashion styles have been sewing back into today's fashion world. The impressive comeback of these iconic styles have influenced society's clothing choices, hairstyles, and even the overall attitude toward fashion. The nostalgia-driven evolution of today's style has impacted the thrifting market as well as noticeable style patterns now seen on social media and in stores. Due to vintage pieces of clothing and accessories becoming popular once again, people have rushed to their nearest thrift stores in order to find the authentic style. Social media has shown us the various amounts of places and streets that people go to for thrifting, the Goodwill Bins for example, have risen in popularity because of this. A few specific items that have woven their way back into today's style would be:

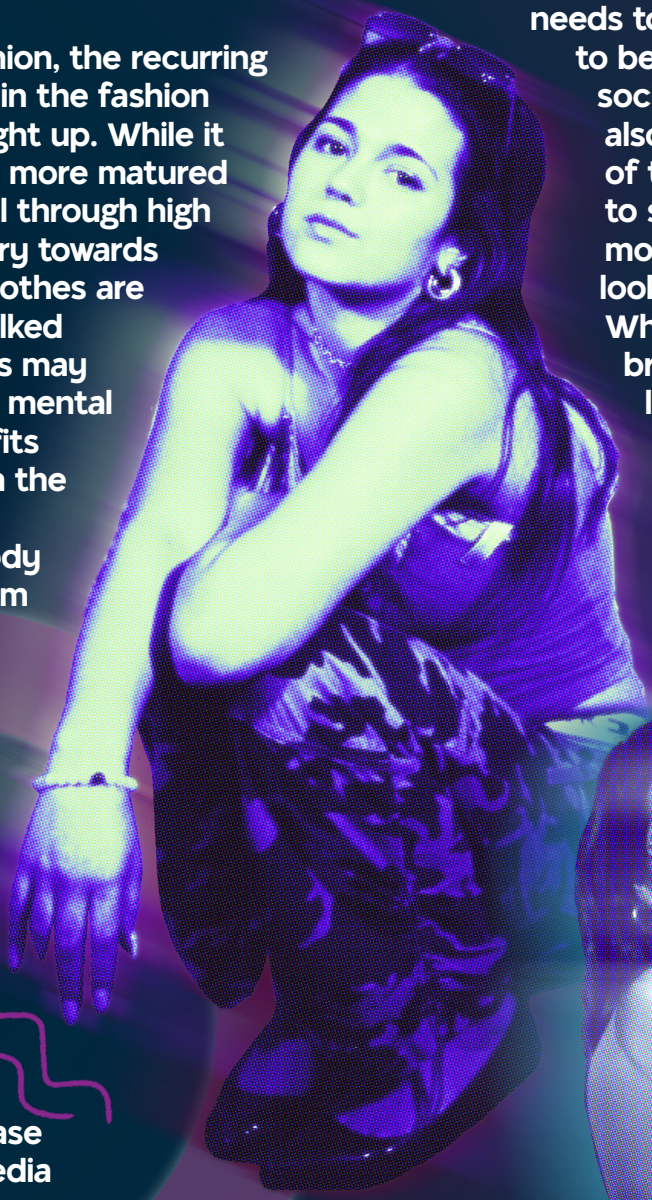
1. Overall Baggier Clothes (especially jeans)
2. Claw Clips
3. Lowrise Pants
4. Cargo Pants ← heavy duty pockets
5. Varsity Jackets

And more!

These styles coming back has caused more of these clothing to make an appearance in your nearest outlet mall and social media advertisements. It's refreshing to see these renewed trends come back into our lives and the creativity people have to add their sense of individuality to their clothes too.

Speaking on fashion, the recurring issue of body shaming in the fashion industry must be brought up. While it is known that girls with more matured bodies in middle school through high school face an adversary towards comments that their clothes are provocative, it is not talked about enough what this may do to harm young girl's mental health. While their outfits can still be aligned with the dress code, young girls often have received body shaming comments from fellow classmates or adults around them whilst growing up. "According to a study conducted, 94 percent of teenage girls and 64 percent of teenagers have encountered some form of body shaming. These numbers are significantly high, yet they continue to increase on the daily." Social media are also increasing these statistics on a regular basis. The toxic body standards it has created have influenced an incredible amount of young women, especially teenage girls that are still developing in their bodies thinking they have to look a certain way.

The progression on social media usage over the years has expanded exponentially which means more and more younger girls have access to apps like instagram for an example that make photoshop just that much easier. This can easily destroy a young girl's self esteem at an early age, and what needs to be educated more is how to be aware of the specific way social media works. People also like to post highlights of their lives, only choosing to show the more aesthetic moments or pictures they've looked especially good in. What this feeds into people's brains is that someone's look who is presenting themselves with no flaws all the time is "normal" and essentially creates a false reality for these girls that scroll through the app comparing themselves.



A Dread of Joy
by Shriya Malu

An argument
And a flower
And the memories they bring

“They are one in the same” she says
Smiling fondly and recalling
The blades of grass blowing in the wind
The unfurling storm brewing within

She continues to smile
Those around her step back

“I made a flower crown” she says
Just for her she thinks
She remembered how it wrapped around her so beautifully

She remembered
How her eyes were unblinking as she lay with the grass
A puff of breath leaving her lips

“Goodbye” she had said
She continued to smile fondly
As she laid right beside her
And played with her hair

Then she laughed and laughed and laughed
With the last breath

UNVEILING THE HIGH SCHOOL ILLUSION: BEYOND THE SILVER SCREEN

Article by: Jehan Sandhu
Design by: Cari Chen & Maya Lei Bagalso

High school has been a recurring setting in countless movies, ranging from classic coming-of-age tales to modern-day dramas. However, the portrayal of high school life in movies often veers far from reality, creating a distorted image that fails to capture the true essence of the teenage experience. One must unravel the disparities between cinematic depictions and the actual high school experience, shedding light on the oversimplifications and exaggerations that often dominate the silver screen.

Social Supremacy and Stereotyping:

Bullying is a prevalent theme in high school movies, where characters are often subjected to relentless torment by stereotypical antagonists. While bullying remains a serious issue, the cinematic portrayal tends to exaggerate its frequency and intensity. In reality, students are more likely to encounter a spectrum of behaviors, ranging from subtle exclusion to overt harassment. Additionally, the response from peers and educators is often more nuanced than the clear-cut heroes and villains depicted in films.

Contrary to the movie narrative, the majority of high school students are not consumed by a constant obsession with others' lives. The exaggerated focus on interpersonal drama in films overlooks the fact that teenagers are navigating a myriad of personal challenges and aspirations, often prioritizing their own growth over the trivialities depicted on screen.

Bullying vs. Reality:

In the world of high school movies, social hierarchy reigns supreme. The jocks, cheerleaders, nerds, and misfits each occupy distinct, exaggerated roles, perpetuating stereotypes that rarely reflect the complexity of real-life relationships. In reality, the lines between these groups are often blurred, and individuals frequently navigate between various social circles, challenging the simplistic labels imposed by movies.

The notion of social supremacy is not as pronounced in reality as it is in films. While cliques exist, they are rarely as rigid or exclusionary as movies would have us believe. High school is a melting pot of diverse personalities and interests, where friendships often form organically, transcending traditional stereotypes.

College and the Future:

Movies often neglect the importance of preparing for the future, focusing instead on the immediate concerns of the teenage characters. While teenage romance and interpersonal relationships are undoubtedly significant aspects of high school life, the emphasis on them at the expense of academic and career aspirations is a distortion of reality.

In reality, high school is a pivotal time for students to explore their interests, discover their passions, and lay the groundwork for their future endeavors. The college application process, career exploration, and personal growth are integral aspects that movies frequently downplay or overlook entirely.

Chick Flicks and Unrealistic Expectations:

Chick flicks, a popular subgenre of romantic comedies, often contribute to unrealistic expectations about high school life and relationships. The portrayal of grand romantic gestures, perfect prom nights, and neatly resolved conflicts can foster unrealistic ideals that can leave viewers with unattainable expectations.

Real-life relationships are far more complex and dynamic, with highs and lows that contribute to personal growth. High school movies, particularly those falling under the chick flick category, often oversimplify the nuances of romantic relationships, creating an illusion that can set individuals up for disappointment.

HOCO 23

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Design by: Juno Winegar
Photos by: William Anderson

Mister Softee
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THE HOLLYWOOD ASIAN MALE

Article by: Eleanor Shin
Design by: Sander Vonk and Annie Marcelino

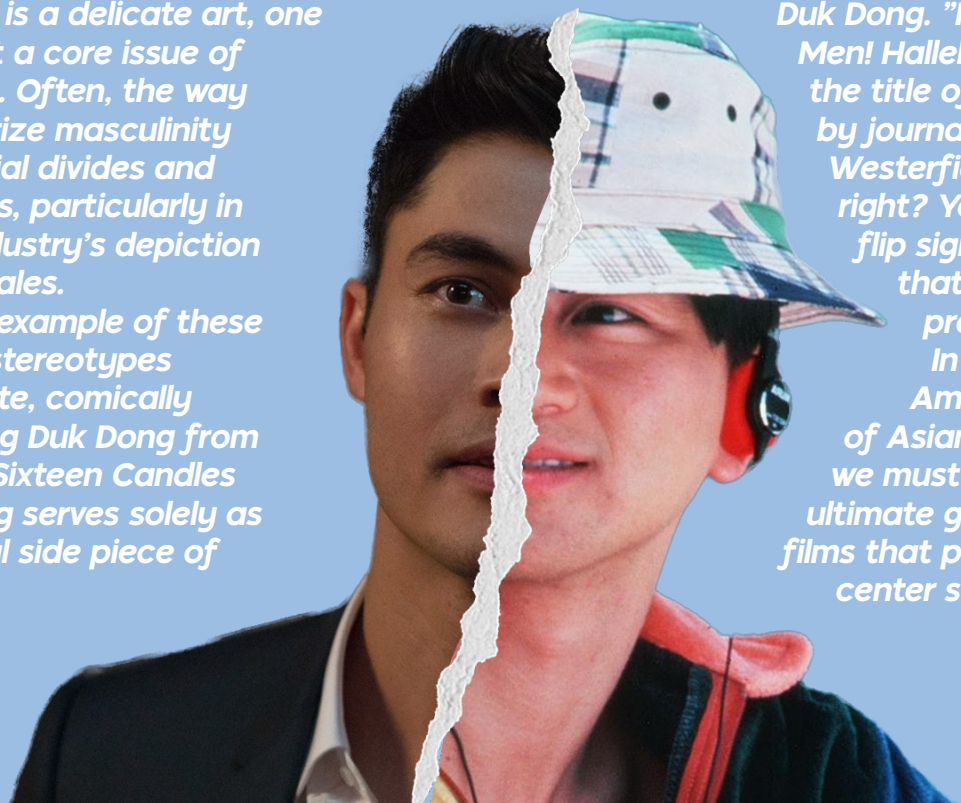
You must assert dominance, be the head of the household, stand stoically unless aggression is warranted. Weakness of any form is a failure of character, and success has no time for feelings.

Such is the traditional Hollywood image of the ideal male. However, contemporary films have since strayed far from this depiction, a development that parallels society's move to redefine what constitutes masculinity. Even so, attempting to validate what once was considered humiliating is a delicate art, one that hits at a core issue of race in film. Often, the way we categorize masculinity mirrors racial divides and stereotypes, particularly in the film industry's depiction of Asian males.

One example of these racialized stereotypes is effeminate, comically clumsy Long Duk Dong from the movie Sixteen Candles (1984). Dong serves solely as the comical side piece of the movie; merely a vessel for entertainment value. His appearances are marked by the sound of a gong, as if to cue laughter for his circus act. It is apparent that his only purpose is to be a caricature.

Nowadays, the films that take its place go in the complete opposite direction. Crazy Rich Asians (2018) was the film that rocked this status quo, and in no way subtly. In the film, most of the Asian males are muscular, affluent, successful, and definitely not redolent of the weak Long Duk Dong. "It's (Sexy) Asian Men! Hallelujah!" declares the title of an NPR article by journalist Hannah Westerfield. Progress, right? Yet, this complete flip signifies a pattern that poses its own problems.

In addressing the American portrayal of Asian men in movies, we must clarify what our ultimate goal is. Through films that put Asian males at center stage, we should



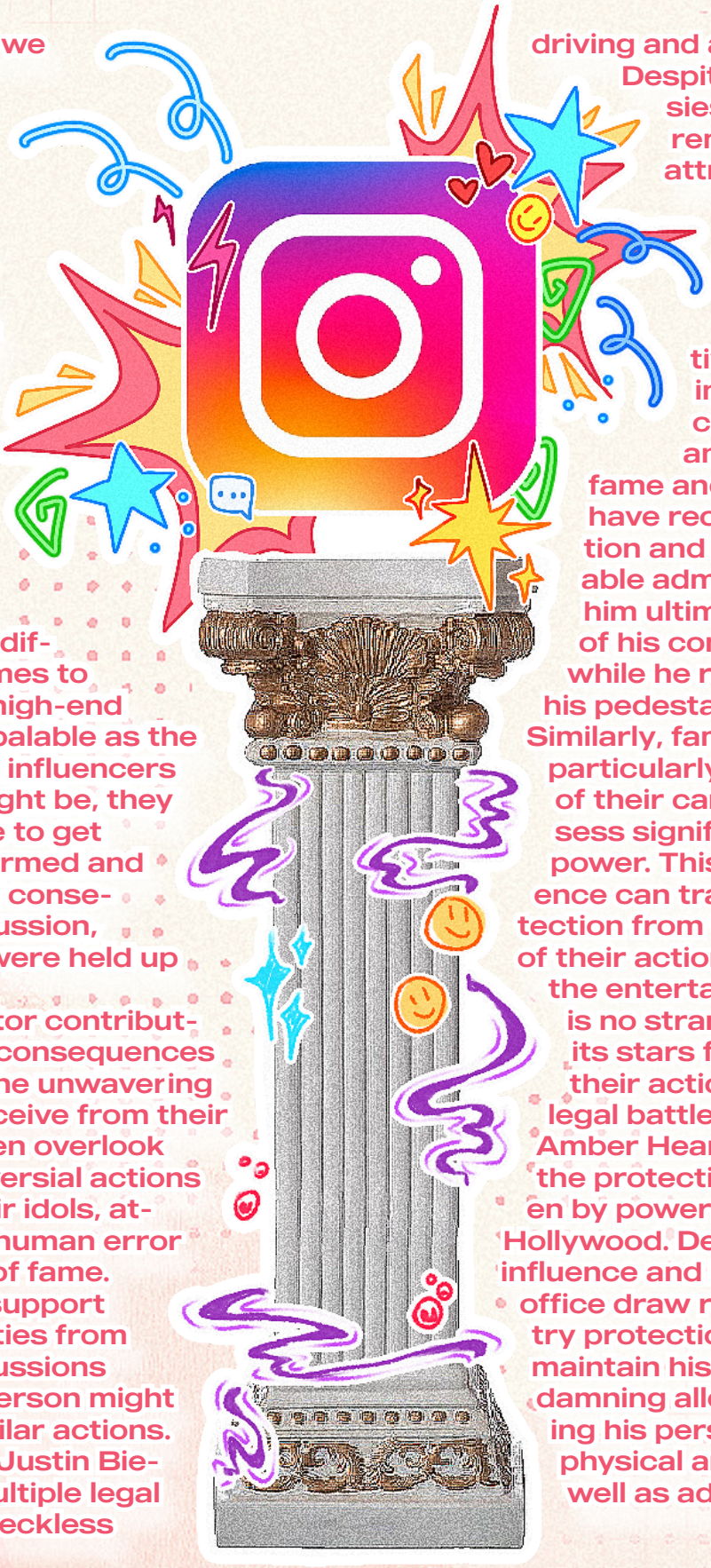
seek to question the traditional, narrow view of masculinity and why men are trying to emulate it in the first place.

The film Everything Everywhere All At Once (2022) shows a clearer picture. The film is a multiverse-spanning, at once philosophical and irreverent piece. At its heart is Evelyn, a Chinese immigrant mother who runs a laundromat with her husband Waymond. The Waymond we see at the beginning of the film is the picture of the "beta" male: docile, naively optimistic, and tactlessly removed from practical reality. Evelyn is then left to deal with the trials and tribulations of heading her family alone. By not assuming the typical role of the patriarch, Waymond is seemingly useless. This film subverts these stereotypes by embodying, in physical form, typical expressions of masculinity, taking advantage of the bizarre, reality-bending setting of the film. Different versions of Waymond appear as avatars from parallel realities where the "ideal" Waymond may have had a chance to develop. Evelyn's interactions with these various versions of her husband implores us to look at the pitfalls of the traditional "alpha" male.

The Waymond of the beginning of the film never undergoes a radical transformation. At the end, he is still sensitive, optimistic, and sincere. What changes by the end of the movie is our outlook of such traits. Our dismissal of these characteristics as hopelessly naive is dispeled upon realizing that with these traits, the original Waymond accrues a silent strength. This strength being the one that ultimately prevails against the "evil" force of the movie, accomplishing what couldn't have been done by the other versions of Waymond.

Everything Everywhere All At Once is not a film primarily about Asian masculinity. But its genre-defying, universe-juxtaposing scope ultimately parallels a monumental shift brought by the film. Too long has the stoic, dominant male-one largely associated with white men-been the paradigm for masculinity. This film signals progress in our movies-both through its reflection on the Asian male stereotype, and its questioning of the notion of masculinity itself. As films continue in this trajectory, hopefully the rigid walls set by society, too, will crumble.

The Social Pedestal



In the world we live in today, it would seem that people are held accountable for their actions and negative behaviors. Everyone is more aware of the ills in the world, what's right vs. what's wrong, and the immense impact one choice can have on a person, their life, and even on others. However, it is actually quite different when it comes to social media and high-end celebrities. As appalable as the actions of famous influencers and celebrities might be, they somehow manage to get away with it, unharmed and free of any sort of consequence or repercussion, almost as if they were held up on a pedestal.

One key factor contributing to this lack of consequences for celebrities is the unwavering adoration they receive from their fanbase. Fans often overlook or forgive controversial actions committed by their idols, attributing them to human error or the pressures of fame. This unwavering support can shield celebrities from facing the repercussions that an average person might encounter for similar actions. Take for example Justin Bieber, who faced multiple legal issues, including reckless driving and assault charges. Despite these controversies, Bieber's fan base remained steadfast, attributing his behavior to the pressures of fame and youthful indiscretion. This loyalty acted as a protective shield, insulating him from severe consequences that anyone without his fame and support would have received. His idolization and his fan's unbreakable admiration towards him ultimately kept the rate of his consequences low while he remained high on his pedestal.

Similarly, famous individuals, particularly those at the peak of their careers, often possess significant economic power. This economic influence can translate into protection from the consequences of their actions. For example, the entertainment industry is no stranger to shielding its stars from the fallout of their actions. Johnny Depp's legal battles with his ex-wife Amber Heard shed light on the protective measures taken by powerful figures within Hollywood. Depp's economic influence and his status as a box office draw resulted in industry protection, allowing him to maintain his career despite the damning allegations surrounding his personal life, including physical and sexual abuse, as well as addiction to alcohol

Article by: Pedro Alcazar
Design by: Kai Zhou and Sander Vonk

and drugs. The publicity surrounding his legal battle with Heard and the way people, including fans, constantly sided with Depp ultimately shows that the unwavering support of fans also had an impact on Depp's lack of consequences and the outcome of his case, not just his economic stability.

Now, looking at the impact of social media, while it has empowered the public to hold celebrities accountable through movements like "cancel culture," the outrage generated is often short-lived. Public attention can shift rapidly, leading to a lack of continuous pressure on celebrities to face lasting consequences for their actions. This cycle of temporary outrage contributes to the perception that fame provides a shield against enduring repercussions. This was evident in the case of Logan Paul. The YouTuber faced swift backlash for posting a controversial video featuring a suicide victim in a Japanese forest. His lack of sensitivity and care as well as his perceived sense of mocking when he found the corpse led to his "cancellation" on the YouTube Platform and social media in general. However, while the initial consequences he faced were severe, he eventually managed to weather the storm, starting with his infamous apology video, which allowed him to continue his online presence relatively unscathed as public attention shifted elsewhere. This was also the case for Colleen Ballinger. The long time YouTuber faced multiple allegations regarding her relationships with fans, especially young ones, as well as her use of the comedic character Miranda Sings to engage in inappropriate behaviors that should in no way be tolerated. After multiple individuals came out to expose the negative behaviors of Colleen, she made an unserious apology video on the ukulele, denying all of the allegations and taking no accountability whatsoever. Despite the fact that people continued to come out against her and that the internet "canceled her", just 4 months later, she returned to regular posting on her Vlogs Channel. Proving that even "cancel cultureq" and the use of social media falls short of ever establishing long-term consequences for celebrities who do harm.

Ultimately, the lack of consequences for controversial actions by celebrities is a complex issue influenced by factors such as public adoration, economic power, the overwhelming power of "cancel culture" and most importantly, idolization and the concept of well-known individuals being held up on a pedestal. Addressing this phenomenon requires a collective effort from the public, the media, and the entertainment industry to foster a culture where accountability is prioritized over fame. Only then can a more just and equitable treatment of individuals, regardless of their celebrity status, be achieved.

Article by: Sophia Ong
Design by: Maya Lei Bagalso

CHILD STARS

Violating Celebrities Privacy

The Struggle of Happiness in Adulthood

Jennette McCurdy was the envy of every little girl during the early 2000s. An early start in show business led her to a multi-million dollar role in the hit Nickelodeon show iCarly; fame, wealth, glamor, all before she turned 18. Yet, beneath the surface of McCurdy's idyllic career lay a world of manipulation, exploitation, and various mental and physical illnesses. Children are easily impressionable and know little about their own worth, what is "right", and how they should be treated as a professional. For this reason, child stars often find themselves coerced in environments that they are ill-equipped to handle, for instance, incredibly long workdays, over-sexualization by the media, and criticism on a global scale. Their emotions are exploited for attention, they fall into unreasonably high expectations for themselves, a need for perfection, which can lead to anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Especially with young women, their worth is quickly established to be determined by their appearance; Jennette McCurdy battled years of bulimia because her mother convinced her that staying skinny, unhealthily so, was the only way to keep jobs rolling through the door.

A lot of the root causes of the dangers of child stardom are apparent in everyday teenage life, as well. The effects of media are clear; teenagers today have an overwhelming tendency towards self- criticism and poor body image. Oversexualization is also an issue; many teenage girls grow up believing that they are worth what their body or face can offer, an idea amplified by apps like Instagram and Tiktok, where the number of likes we get can give us a quantitative number on our self-worth. These apps are ways for us to reach millions of people with one picture or video, and so even if the spotlight on a child star is far bigger, social media has ensured that each one of us has a spotlight on us at all times, a concept that has been proven to be damaging to the developing child.

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Article by: Amanda Balbuena-Solis | Des

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D-19

sign by: Dhrithi Vishwa and Nathan Louie

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, has had profound and far-reaching effects on societies worldwide. One of the most significant dimensions of its impact is the financial upheaval it triggered. The pandemic led to a severe contraction in the global economy. Lockdowns, travel restrictions, and disruptions in supply chains have caused a decline in economic activities, leading to recessionary pressures. Industries such as hospitality, tourism, and aviation have been particularly hard-hit, resulting in massive job losses and business closures. Skyrocketing unemployment rates have been a hallmark of the pandemic's financial impact and individuals across various sectors have faced job losses, furloughs, or reduced working hours. The unequal distribution of these economic hardships has widened income inequality, worsening existing societal disparities.

Governments around the world have implemented massive stimulus packages to counter the economic fallout of the pandemic. These measures, while crucial for preventing a complete economic collapse, have also led to a surge in national debts. The long-term consequences of this increased debt burden are yet to unfold, raising concerns about future fiscal sustainability. The pandemic has accelerated changes in consumer behavior, with a notable shift towards online shopping and digital services. This transformation has both positive and negative financial implications. While e-commerce has thrived, traditional brick-and-mortar businesses have struggled, contributing to job losses and economic restructuring. The widespread adoption of remote work as a response to lockdowns has had lasting effects on the job market and business operations. The increased reliance on digital technologies has driven innovation in some sectors but has also highlighted disparities in access to technology, potentially exacerbating socioeconomic divides. Small businesses, often the backbone of local economies, have faced immense challenges during the pandemic. Many have closed permanently, leading to job losses and decreased economic vitality in local communities. The financial strain on small businesses has underscored the need for more resilient economic structures. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, disrupting the flow of goods and services. This has led to increased costs for businesses and, in some cases, a reevaluation of the reliance on international supply networks. The financial repercussions of these disruptions are likely to persist in the post-pandemic era. In conclusion, the financial effects of COVID-19 on society are multifaceted and complex. The pandemic has not only caused a global economic downturn but has also reshaped the way societies function economically.

As nations work towards recovery, it is essential to address the challenges highlighted by the pandemic and build more resilient and equitable economic systems. The long-term impact of COVID-19 on society's financial landscape will continue to unfold in the years to come.

Photos by: Whitney Ross and Dhrithi Vishwa

How Political is Too Political?

Article by: Maddie Lam | Design by: Maya Yoder

From monarchies and dynasties to democracies and republics, the usage and structures of governmental systems has vastly changed over the thousands of years that humans have inhabited Earth. Yet various commonalities in citizens' behavior under these systems have consistently occurred in societies across the globe. One such pattern is the tendency for individuals to evaluate political opinions based on their relation to the individual's personal moral code. In other words, people often praise views that they perceive as being aligned with their own philosophies, and reject views that are not. This is not necessarily a bad approach, as it's always ideal to remain true to yourself and your beliefs, but its popularity also comes with a natural downside: when so many people build their political stances on a foundation of strong morals, debates about politics can quickly devolve into debates about whose set of values should reign superior. Suddenly, it's not just your dignity and pride at stake, but your entire outlook on life as well. As a result, political issues have become extremely polarizing and heated subjects of discussion.

Not only that, but the common association between politics and ethics can lead to concrete, real-life consequences that have the ability to jeopardize people's security and safety. The simple act of sharing your thoughts on a political issue (or even giving the impression that you think a certain way) may leave you vulnerable to punishment from those with higher positions of power because they morally oppose your position. Such punishment can come in many forms, including suspension, censorship, and even removal from a job position. Case in point: at the height of Cold War-era McCarthyism, any government official who was merely accused of supporting the Soviet Union or communism was fired without hesitation, regardless of the allegations' accuracy. They even targeted government workers who were suspected to be gay or lesbian on the grounds that they would be more susceptible to blackmail and communist propaganda. Although this example leans towards the extreme, it illustrates how being open with others about your own political stances is a huge risk that many people cannot afford to take.

Topics to discuss

- The weather
- Plans for week
- The new lunch menu
- ~~Politics~~

An outcome of all this is the common belief that the inherently controversial nature of politics provides more than enough reason to steer clear of it when going about one's daily life. Between coworkers exchanging small talk in the breakroom and

families chatting at the Thanksgiving dinner table, people avoid bringing up politics in casual conversation like it's the plague. This aversion to overtly political topics in everyday interactions has brought forth the notion that the realm of politics is entirely separated from everything else happening in the world and that's the way it should be. After all, why would we make an effort to voice our views on such divisive issues if they're not even relevant to anything we do?

In reality, however, politics and society are more connected than you might think. The basic dictionary definition of the word "politics" attributes it to anything that is related to government. By this definition, the structure of politics inherently requires it to be intertwined with our everyday lifestyles, as government policies are inseparable from the society that is governed by them. There is no doubt that government greatly influences society; the laws they enforce directly impact citizens' lives and help contribute to the attitudes they develop. Moreover, the reverse is also true: society greatly influences government, especially a representative democracy such as the United States where governments on all levels are composed of representatives of the people. Considering the link between these two concepts, most people live a more political life than they realize, and the line in the sand that we draw between "political" and "not political" is practically arbitrary. However, it has a large ripple effect on civic participation. The misconception of politics being unrelated to the rest of society can discourage people from starting conversations about certain subjects out of the fear that they'll be seen negatively by others. This ultimately prevents people who aren't actively seeking out the range of perspectives on social issues from fully understanding them, which reduces the amount of democratic discourse occurring in regards to these topics.

Political conversations may be hard, but in many cases they are necessary to sustain the circulation and spread of ideas. Although it's true that there are some situations in which politics is better off being left out, this doesn't mean it's productive to avoid it altogether. At the end of the day, being "overly political" is just having beliefs that people might not agree with. And why should that be a bad thing?

Design by: Nathan Louie

Notes

Bedtime Procrastination: what it is, how it affects teens, what we can do

It's 11:30 pm, you're ready for bed. You've just gotten through another whirlwind day - a test, friend group drama - and it's only natural that you allow yourself some time to destress, to relax before going to sleep. Just an hour. You open Instagram, react to your friends' stories, then open Tiktok and after a while, you realize it's 12:45. Time got away from you. The next evening, you're swamped with studying. You've got a midterm tomorrow and this test really matters. You finish around 2:00 am and think, wow, I worked hard today, I better let myself relax a bit. Despite being two hours later than the previous night, you still give yourself your allotted time to "destress", an hour of mindless scrolling that stretches into two. You go to bed at 3:15. You get only four hours of sleep, but hey, you needed that time to relax. You needed that control at the spare end of your day.

This phenomenon is called "revenge bedtime procrastination" and it's something we're all guilty of. Sacrificing sleep for downtime, often to the detriment of our physical and mental health. We do it because it feels good, and because the instant gratification in the moment prevents us from seeing the negative effects later on, such as trouble with focusing, learning, and judgment. We turn to our devices, at the end of our nights to "destress", and yet, ultimately, losing sleep and mental capacity only serves to significantly heighten our stress. The busier we are, the more we need to relax, the worse the effect of bedtime procrastination.

But if giving ourselves time to relax has such unhealthy consequences, when can we relax? One way is to incorporate brief periods of relaxation into your work or studying, rather than all at once during the time you should be sleeping. For instance, every twenty five minutes, take a five minute break, a method called the Pomodoro method (pomofocus.io). Use apps like Screenzen to set time limits for apps like Instagram and Tiktok, which are designed to hold your attention for hours on end. Find ways to make your day a little less stressful, so that your nights are not consumed with attempting to destress - whether that means studying with friends or walking around the block.

Mister

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TOKENISM IN FILM

Article by: Jennifer Kang | Design by: Dhrithi Vishwa and Annie Marcelino

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Tokenism, a concept pervading Hollywood and various other industries, is the inclusion of members from marginalized groups to create the illusion of diversity while sidestepping deeper issues of inequality. This is often driven by factors such as financial considerations and enables companies to broaden their audience without risking alienation. Hence, tokenism can end up being a cost-effective approach to attract a broader audience, while also minimizing the risk of alienating their core customer base.

Soul, Disney Pixar's 2020 film, follows a middle-school-teacher-slash-wannabe-musician named Joe Gardner. Throughout the story, Gardner spends a considerable part of the film as a non-human entity. While these elements are essential to the narrative, the choice raised questions regarding the duration of how long Black characters are represented on screen. Another instance of this is The Princess and The Frog (2009). Despite Tiana's lead role, critics argued that the narrative's tendency to limit her time in human form ultimately sidelines the genuine Black experience. This limitation follows the pattern of Black characters being confined or transformed, unintentionally reducing the time they spend on screen as black characters.

As another example, Disney's new live-action film, The Little Mermaid, recreates the childhood favorite fairytale of a mermaid yearning to explore land. However, this story went through a barrage of both criticism and acclaim for their casting choices. Halle Bailey, an African American actress, played the character of the originally white mermaid Ariel in the classic animated film. Although this decision was approved and accepted as a move towards diversity, some viewers questioned the genuine aspect of it, and if this shift in race was made only to appeal to a broader audience to increase profits. Feminist entertainment publication The Mary Sue wrote, "I celebrate that young Black girls will have a Black Ariel, but beyond that, there is no discernible intent behind the casting here. Diversity, and the praise and vitriol it gathers online, has become a marketing tool for franchises."

Another form of tokenism, present in countless other films, is the "Black best friend", in which a white main character is portrayed with a Black companion. This best friend is little more than an archetype of a hero's sidekick with little to no intriguing backstory or evolution. On the surface, the utilization of this method can be seen as positively inclusive; however, on the other hand, at the end of the day, it is arguably an act of belittling. By casting a main character's best friend as a black actor or actress, the majority of the audience can be given the impression that the minority groups are properly represented. In reality, these archetypes are given roles of merely supporting the main character and own no intriguing or unique personality or character. Upon deeper research into the topic, motives can end up being ingenuine and purely for the box office sales and overall financial gain, demonstrating tokenism of only appearing diverse without truthfully being inclusive, in the casting of black characters.

Tokenism in film isn't exclusive to any particular racial or ethnic group, and various other minority communities have experienced it in different contexts. For example, Hollywood has been criticized for its representation of Asian characters in supporting roles that often stick to stereotypes. The film industry has also utilized tokenism by featuring a single Asian character to create just an illusion of diversity, without genuinely exploring the depth and diversity within the Asian community. Likewise, Latinx representation has faced similar challenges, with characters that are reduced to stereotypical one-dimensional roles and limit the scope for authentic storytelling.

Disney's tokenistic approach to diversity in films and shows has become a subject of critique and discussion on many platforms. Many voices in the form of articles, blog posts, and social media point out instances where Disney superficially includes characters from marginalized groups, failing to address deeper issues of representation; Disney as a company has often been silent on this topic. While social media plays a pivotal role in pushing for more authentic casting choices, Disney and the rest of Hollywood must go beyond performative gestures and commit honestly to diversified casting. Tokenism not only risks ultimately alienating audiences, but it also undermines the impact that authentic representation can have on improving inclusivity and understanding in society.

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